[104 cont.]

226 751 [177 184] Never again during our visit did we come across this type of magic object, which leads us to believe that it does not belong to the Guajiro cultural whole, but that it is due rather to the influence of the mulattoes of the coast who, as is well known, are extremely superstitious.

*756 778 Charms used to call spirits. The use of these charms, to which we have referred on other occasions, is limited to shamans. They use them to facilitate the arrival of their protector spirits when they are in a curing trance or are carrying out any of the functions related to their status. Up to the present we have not arrived at a satisfactory explanation of their influence on the spirits, but we might now bring together the few data we do have. One of the female shamans who served us as informant and who [776] came from the Sierra [de] Jarara possessed charms to attract her spirits. She explained to us that as those spirits are assistants, some to young shamans, some to old ones, the charms to facilitate the arrival of their spirits are also of two classes: for young shamans and the other for old ones.

The charm is made from the leaf of a plant called in Guajiro [824] morõno, which is found in abundance on Itojoro Hill. A woman expert in such articles makes them there [105] by grinding the leaves of the plant to a paste and shaping this into a rounded form which she keeps in a small bag of red thread. The larger ones are reserved for the older shamans, and the others, combined with some of the former, are for the younger.

778 789 [325] [532] [173] The guará or guale. The guará or guale, difficult to find at present, is a kind of idol made from solid gold or silver and of which only a few examples exist as they are no longer made. This small idol is an anthropomorphic representation in fetal position, and it does not seem to be an autochthonous product of the Guajiro as they themselves assert that these idols come from their distant ancestors, by which they mean the Arhuaco of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

This fetish is known sometimes by the name Mareiwa, a divinity or spirit similar to the idea of God but which appears to be nothing else than the spirit of Rain, as we shall see further ahead (cf. "Mareiwa and Wanurú").

[105 cont.]

The owners of this idol – that no one is allowed to look at – keep it jealously guarded in a coffer, from which no one can withdraw it. With it they carry out on certain occasions some curious rituals such as carefully washing it and then exposing it to the sun's rays. When the summers are harsh and long, they bathe the idol, which they say makes it happy, and they then can ask it to send rain.

The small number of these little idols and the ignorance of the natives regarding their origin makes us believe that they are a foreign element, at least with regard to formal representation, which we consider to be the product of acculturation. The possibility that these objects have come from the ancient Arhuaco is also very remote, as we have found no trace in the literature dealing with this group of anything similar to such small idols.

Moreover, objects of gold are so few that at present they are restricted to necklaces, which are highly esteemed and inherited through the maternal line. But it appears that previously there were other golden ornaments other than the necklaces, as Ensign José Nicolás de la Rosa affirms that on a certain occasion "all the population of Río de la Hacha went to war against them, and the struggle was so fierce and bloody that the Guajiro asked for a truce, offering never again to act so treacherously toward the subjects of the King of Spain, and as a sign of this intention and as compensation for the death of Tomás (Quintero), they delivered to his Majesty [106] a two-headed golden eagle, the jewel being deposited as a hostage to assure the keeping of the peace in the Royal Treasury." (62)

62. De la Rosa, José Nicolás. Floresta de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Santa Marta [Treasures of the St. Marta Cathedral], 2d., IV, 213.

Up to now we have not been able to discover the historic value of the small idol called guará or guale, and we continue to incline toward our first opinion that it is a product of acculturation.